Guiding Principles

"Water links us to our neighbor in a way more profound and complex than any other."
—John Thorson, Indian Water Rights, July 2003

1. Water is a precious and finite natural resource, one that is essential to all life and vital to ecological, economic and social well-being.
2. The disparate distribution of water resources among watersheds poses a challenge to equitable allocation and use.
3. Prudent water management requires a commitment to ecological integrity and biologic diversity to ensure a healthy environment; to a dynamic economy; and to social equity for present and future generations.
4. The most effective way to eliminate pollution is to prevent it from occurring.
5. Integrated management is crucial for sound results. In making water resource management decisions:
   - Link water quality and water quantity with the management of other resources
   - Recognize hydrologic, ecologic, social and institutional systems
   - Recognize the importance of watershed and aquifer boundaries
   - Avoid shifts in pollution from one medium to another and avoid creating a problem in a different location or environmental medium
   - Push the boundaries of technologic possibility while balancing economic constraints
6. Improved land management is essential for improving the condition of water resources.
   - Decision-making should be based on sound scientific principles and an understanding of the relationship between land and water resources
   - Effective integrated management requires coordinated planning and action by all levels of government including federal, regional, state, and local levels
   - Existing planning efforts can provide the foundation for improving land and water resources management
7. Individually and collectively, we are responsible for the stewardship of our water resources through their judicious use and management.
   - An informed public is critical to an improved environmental future
   - Public – private partnerships and enhanced cooperation are necessary for improved results
   - Successful decision frameworks are flexible enough to encourage and adapt to innovations and new knowledge
8. Existing legal structures and laws provide the framework in which management decisions are made.

"A living system exhibits integrity if, when subjected to disturbance, it sustains an organized self-correcting ability to recover toward physical, biological and chemical conditions normal for that system."

—Based on USEPA Terminology Reference System 1997, www.epa.gov

9. Decision-making should give due consideration to the policies and requirements in existing laws and the legal rights of persons and entities potentially affected by water management decisions.
10. Authority to make integrated management decisions shall be derived from existing law as applicable, and may entail modifying or enacting new law(s).
11. Legal structures should be utilized that facilitate managing water resources within entire basins, watersheds, and aquifers, rather than on the basis of political jurisdictional boundaries, while continuing to respect the sovereignty of states and their political subdivisions.
12. In water resources management, preferable actions are those that are structured to accommodate and be consistent with:
    - Preservation and enhancement of ecological integrity
    - Sustainability
    - Feasibility
    - Resilience to natural variability

Actions to be taken to implement the Goals and Objectives of this Plan should be judged against the above concepts of the Guiding Principles.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BASIN

The Delaware is the longest un-dammed river east of the Mississippi.

Roughly half of New York City's water comes from Delaware River headwater reservoirs. The Delaware and its tributaries serve up water to Philadelphia and a cluster of other nearby riverbank cities, which collectively comprise the world's largest freshwater port.

The Delaware River winds through Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, which jump started America's Industrial Revolution.

The upper Delaware flows beneath the Roebling Aqueduct, built by engineer John Roebling who designed the fabled Brooklyn Bridge. The aqueduct bridge is said to be the oldest existing wire suspension bridge in the United States.

The Delaware River has attracted writers and painters. Walt Whitman discovered poetry in its commerce. Rudyard Kipling described the Revolutionary battle of Valley Forge in his verse. Thomas Eakins painted sailboats skipping over the white-capped waves of Delaware Bay.

At a riverbank ceremony in 1996, former Delaware Governor Thomas R. Carper remarked "…the cleanup of the Delaware has been heralded as one of the world's top water quality success stories."

As a result of a remarkable comeback in water quality and a growing appreciation of her myriad attractions, much of the Delaware River and portions of several tributaries today are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The upper Delaware River watershed is home to the largest population of wintering bald eagles in the northeastern United States due in large part to programs to protect high water quality and preserve critical habitat.

The tidal reaches of the Delaware, along with the Delaware Bay, are part of the National Estuary Program, a project initiated in 1988 to protect estuarine systems of national significance.

The Delaware Bay is the principal breeding grounds for American horseshoe crabs on the East Coast and is among the largest staging areas for shorebirds in North America.